

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 00211 01 OF 02 121334Z
ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 /084 W
-----128314 121412Z /50

O P 121245Z JAN 78 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 0183
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 0211

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, SF, WA
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: SCHEDULING OF PROXIMITY TALKS

REF: (A) USUN 0094, (B) STATE 008298, (C) USUN 0097

1. FOR THE RECORD THE FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES MY CONVERSATION
WITH AMBASSADOR MCHENRY AND UNDER SECRETARY VAN DALSEN
ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 11:
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PAGE 02 PRETOR 00211 01 OF 02 121334Z

-- AMBASSADOR MCHENRY CALLED AT 5:55 P.M. LOCAL TIME
ON BEHALF OF THE CG TO REQUEST THAT I EXPLORE WITH THE
SOUTH AFRICANS WHETHER THEY WOULD HAVE PROBLEMS
WITH EITHER JANUARY 23 OR FEBRUARY 6 FOR THE START
OF THE PROXIMITY TALKS. I WAS TO MAKE CLEAR THAT
THE INQUIRY WAS EXPLORATORY GIVEN THE CG OBJECTIVE
OF FINDING A DATE ON WHICH THE SIDES COULD COME TO

NEW YORK TO MAKE PROXIMITY TALKS POSSIBLE.

-- I IMMEDIATELY CONVEYED THE FOREGOING TO VAN DALSEN.

HE SAID HE WOULD RELAY THE INQUIRY TO BOTHA. BECAUSE BOTHA MIGHT HAVE TO CONSULT THE PM ON THE MATTER, IT MIGHT BE SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE HE COULD RELAY A REPLY.

-- VAN DALSEN CALLED BACK AT 7:40 P.M. LOCAL TIME.

HE SAID BOTHA HAD ASKED HIM TO PASS ON SEVERAL POINTS:

(1) FROM THE RECEIPT OF THE CG INVITATION ON DEC. 28 THE SAG HAS MADE CLEAR THAT OUR TALKS ARE TO BE WITH THE CG ONLY; (2) BECAUSE HE REGARDED THE INVITATION FOR JANUARY 17 AS "VERY DEFINITE," HE HAD PUT OFF TWO ALREADY SCHEDULED TRIPS ABROAD AT CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT; (3) A DATE IN FEBRUARY FOR THE NEW YORK TALKS IS OUT OF THE QUESTION BECAUSE OF PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS; (4) "RELUCTANTLY" HE CAN CHANGE THE DATE TO JANUARY 23 BUT HE HAS TO BE BACK IN CAPE TOWN BY JANUARY 26 BECAUSE PARLIAMENT OPENS THE FOLLOWING DAY; (5) HE REQUESTS A REPLY ON THE DATE FROM THE CG BY 0900 FRIDAY, JANUARY 13 LOCAL TIME.

-- I IMMEDIATELY RELAYED THE BOTHA MESSAGE TO AMBASSADOR MCHENRY.

2. THIS MORNING BRAND FOURIE CALLED TO CANCEL HIS 12:00 NOON MEETING TOMORROW (PRETORIA 171 NOTAL). HE EXPLAINED THAT, SINCE HE WOULD NOT BE TRAVELLING TO NEW YORK TOMORROW NIGHT, HE WOULD NOT MAKE THE TRIP
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PAGE 03 PRETOR 00211 01 OF 02 121334Z

TO PRETORIA. I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK HIM WHY A DATE IN FEBRUARY WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR THE PROXIMITY TALKS. HE REPLIED THAT TWO FOREIGN TRIPS HAD BEEN CANCELLED IN ORDER FOR BOTHA TO ACCEPT THE JANUARY 17 DATE. A FOREIGN DELEGATION IS DUE TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 6 AND RESCHEDULING OF THE CANCELLED TRIPS IS ALSO UNDER CONSIDERATION.

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 00211 02 OF 02 121408Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRETORIA 0211

3. THE UNHELPFUL SAG POSITION, WE BELIEVE, IS DUE TO SEVERAL FACTORS -- AMONG THEM: PIK'S PIQUE IN THE GAMESMANSHIP WITH SWAPO; A DESIRE BY BOTHA TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH THE MEDIA BLITZ PRIOR TO JANUARY 29; ANNOYANCE OVER FURTHER DELAYS IN THE SCENARIO FOR AN INTERNAL SOLUTION; AND VALID PARLIAMENTARY CONCERNS. WE STRONGLY SUSPECT THAT THE SAG HAD CONSTRUCTED A SCENARIO AROUND FAILURE OF THE TALKS TO BRIDGE THE DIFFERENCES WITH SWAPO, USE BY BOTHA OF HIS PRESENCE IN NEW YORK TO LAUNCH A MAJOR
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PAGE 02 PRETOR 00211 02 OF 02 121408Z

CAMPAIGN THROUGH THE US MEDIA TO EXPLAIN THE REASONABLENESS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POSITION, AND UNILATERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS ON OR ABOUT JANUARY 29 OF AN ELECTION DATE. THE SWAPO POSITION HAS DISRUPTED THIS SCHEDULE, TO BOTHA'S CONSIDERABLE ANNOYANCE.

4. WE REGARD BOTHA'S DESIRE TO BE ON HAND FOR THE EARLY STAGES OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT, AND PARTICULARLY THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE, AS LEGITIMATE. GIVEN HIS PERSONAL AMBITION, HIS DESIRE TO CASH IN ON KUDOS FOR THE NP ELECTORAL VICTORY IN WHICH HE WAS SUCH A LARGE PLAYER AND THE FOREIGN POLICY INPUT INTO THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT HE WOULD WANT TO BE IN CAPE TOWN FOR THE FIRST 10-14 DAYS OF THE SESSION. AFTER THAT

THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE SUBSTANTIAL REASONS FOR HIS NOT GETTING AWAY. THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE DOES NOT LAST MORE THAN A WEEK. THIS IS USUALLY FOLLOWED BY PROGRAM/ BUDGET PRESENTATIONS BY EACH MINISTER FOLLOWING AN ORDER BASED ON SENIORITY. BOTHA, AS A JUNIOR MEMBER, COMES CLOSE TO THE END. REGARDING FOURIE'S COMMENT ON A "FOREIGN DELEGATION" COMING THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 6, IT IS HARD TO CONCEIVE OF ANY LIKELY DELEGATION WHICH WOULD TOP THE IMPORTANCE OF A NAMIBIAN SETTLEMENT.

5. WHILE BOTHA IS HANGING TOUGH ON TALKS BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY, HE MUST ALSO REALIZE THAT SAG REFUSAL TO MEET DURING FEBRUARY IS NOT LIKELY TO GIVE HIM THAT BACK-DROP OF REASONABLENESS WHICH HE IS SEEKING. CONSEQUENTLY, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD PUSH FOR FEBRUARY 6 OR CLOSEST DATE THEREAFTER WHICH SAG WISHES TO SET. THIS ASSUMES, OF COURSE, THAT SWAPO WOULD AGREE TO THIS OPEN-ENDED APPROACH AND NOT BALK IF THE SAG CHOSE FEBRUARY 13, FOR EXAMPLE. WHETHER UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PRETOR 00211 02 OF 02 121408Z

THE SAG WOULD HOLD OFF IN ANNOUNCING A DATE FOR ELECTION, I AM NOT SO SURE. THE SAME CONSTRAINTS ON HAVING A FAVORABLE BACKDROP PERTAIN. BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT VORSTER MAY HAVE GIVEN THE TURNHALLE GROUP A COMMITMENT TO FIX AN ELECTION DATE BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY, IN WHICH CASE HIS INCLINATION WILL BE TO HONOR IT AND LET WORLD OPINION TAKE THE HINDMOST.

6. IN CONNECTION WITH THE OPTIONS LISTED IN PARA 7 OF REFTTEL C, I ASSUME DEPT AND USUN WILL WISH TO REVIEW CG SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY BETWEEN LUSAKA AND PRETORIA AS THE NEAREST ALTERNATIVE TO NEW YORK PROXIMITY TALKS. BOWDLER

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